

The Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy is pleased to welcome you to Guatemala very soon. Our office is the point of contact for questions concerning your Fulbright experience in Guatemala. In addition to general advising, the Cultural Affairs Office offers the following services:

- Arrival information
- Security briefing for all incoming Fulbright scholars and students (mandatory)
- Instructions for registering with the American Citizen Warden System
- Access to banking services in the Embassy
- Access to the Internet at the Embassy
- Assistance with immigration issues

The Cultural Affairs Office requests that all incoming Fulbrighters contact our office prior to arrival by emailing Cultural Specialist Carmen Foncea at [fonceac@state.gov](mailto:fonceac@state.gov). As soon as possible after arrival in Guatemala, you should plan to come to the Embassy for a courtesy call with the staff of the Cultural Affairs Office, a security briefing by the Regional Security Officer (offered on Wednesdays only), and to register with the Consular Section. The Embassy is conveniently located in the heart of Guatemala City. For security reasons, it is important never to ride a public bus in Guatemala City. To come to the Embassy on your own, it is best to come by foot or by using a secure taxi (either a taxi associated with a hotel or by calling for a radio dispatched Taxi Amarillo Express at 2470-1515). Please be sure to bring your U.S. passport with you when you visit the Embassy.

Whether you are in temporary or permanent quarters, you are required to provide the Cultural Affairs Office with up-to-date contact information (including e-mail). You are required to get permission from the Embassy and IIE prior to leaving Guatemala, including for vacations. We also recommend that you advise us anytime you travel within Guatemala so that we can reach you in case of an emergency. The Security Office occasionally restricts Embassy personnel from visiting parts of Guatemala or from traveling on certain routes because of security concerns (this information is shared through the Internet website, <http://guatemala.usembassy.gov>). As a participant in the Fulbright program, you are required to abide by these restrictions. The Security Office is available for consultations if you have any specific security questions.

### **Arrival Information:**

Before or as soon as possible after your arrival, please contact our office to set up your initial courtesy call. Wednesdays are preferred so that you can receive your security briefing on the same day. Most incoming Fulbrighters make arrangements with a local hotel and begin to look for permanent quarters after arrival.

### **Security Briefing:**

During your visit to the Embassy, you will be given the most up-to-date information about personal security in Guatemala. General information is available on the U.S. Embassy Guatemala website or at <http://travel.state.gov/travel/guatemala.html>.

**Instructions for Registering with the American Citizen Warden System:**

All Fulbrighters should register with the Consular Section (in addition to providing regular up-to-date contact information to the Cultural Affairs Office). You can register when you visit the Embassy in person for your briefings or online through the web at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

**Access to Banking Services within the Embassy:**

The Embassy has a branch office of a private bank that offers secure basic banking services. The bank is open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Friday. Checks drawn on your U.S. bank account can be cashed into quetzals or dollars. You can also change dollars into quetzals and vice versa. No service fee is charged for any of these services. Opening a local bank account can be time-consuming and difficult (and may be impossible due to recent changes in banking law). The best practice is to bring paper checks, an ATM card, and credit cards (Visa and MasterCard are the most widely accepted). ATMs are common in Guatemala City, Antigua, and Quetzaltenango, although you should exercise caution when using them. With 24 hours advance notice, traveler's checks can also be obtained through the Embassy branch bank without a fee.

**Access to Internet Services:**

Internet service is widely available in Guatemala, but the Cultural Affairs Office provides access to the Internet to Fulbrighters during Embassy hours at the Information Research Center.

**Assistance with Immigration Issues:**

Unfortunately it is not possible to acquire a long-term visa prior to arrival in Guatemala. Student visas are only available to students or scholars associated directly with Guatemalan universities. Although it may be technically possible to obtain a permit after arrival, the process is costly and time-consuming. Most Fulbrighters find that entering as a tourist and renewing their status is easier and cheaper, although it requires some advance planning. In that scenario, you enter Guatemala on a normal 90-day tourist permit (issued with no fee at the airport). At the expiration of 90 days you can request either an extension for an additional 90 days or travel outside the country and return to obtain a new 90-day tourist permit. The Cultural Affairs Office will explain the process in more detail when you arrive in Guatemala and will assist you in submitting any necessary paperwork to the Migration Department.

**Any Other Concerns:**

If you have any needs or concerns not addressed here, please contact Carmen Foncea at [fonceac@state.gov](mailto:fonceac@state.gov) or Kathleen Guerra at [guerrakm@state.gov](mailto:guerrakm@state.gov).

We look forward to meeting you soon!